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AUTHOR Scholtz, Ann Judith
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ABSTRACT

This study was an investigation into the relationships between reading interests and reading comprehension as demonstrated by a group of fifth-graders who rated reading passages for interest and then were checked for comprehension of these same passages. A seven-point rating inventory, ranging from a "liked very, very much" rating to a "disliked very, very much" rating, was used to measure the reader's interest. The mean reading achievement grade-level score for the 110 fifth-grade students participating in this study was 5.9 at the time of the study's testing program. It was concluded that expressed interest is not a factor which affects reading comprehension. Reading interest patterns do provide information as to what children will read, but are not significant in determining the level of reading comprehension. (Author/RB)

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AN INVESTIGATION OF THE ROLE OF INTEREST AS A FACTOR IN READING COMPREHENSION

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY

OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

OF

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BY

ANN JUDITH SCHOLTZ

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OF

MASTER OF EDUCATION

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Reading, in today's contemporary society, is still one of the chief media for learning. The relationship of literacy to a nation's economic and social development is generally recognized. When, how, and what Johnny learns to read has become an issue of national concern and priority in a society that demands an increasingly literate populace.

In establishing the national Right-to-Read program, Allen (in Zimet, 1972) expressed this concern in these words: "We should immediately set for ourselves the goal of assuring that by the end of the 1970's, the right to read shall be a reality for all--that no one shall be leaving our schools without the skill and the desire necessary to read to the full limits of his capability [p. viii]."

The reading process is viewed as being a most complex one, in which many skills, habits, and attitudes are developed. The successful reader is one who comprehends meaning from the printed symbol, and it is to this end that reading instruction is aimed.

Effective comprehension is dependent upon many factors. They include, but are not limited to, experiential background, language development, intellectual development, visual and auditory abilities, physical well-being, and social and emotional maturity.

Achievement in reading is also dependent on a pupil's motivational readiness for reading itself. Dechant (1968) suggests that poor reading or reading failure may be caused by lack of interest in reading as a satisfying activity. From Harris' discussion (1970) on the value of fostering the desire to read, it would seem that as there is a tendency for a reader to attend and concentrate more on interesting reading material than on uninteresting reading material, that he would also understand the more interesting material better than the uninteresting material.

Content is seen as a possible contributing factor in reading retardation. Even articles which have appeared in the popular press have called attention to elements of uninteresting content of some reading materials put into the hands of our elementary youngsters. It is also possible that content may be a contributing factor in reading achievement, and that it may be an important factor.

Studies investigating the role interest plays in affecting reading comprehension (Bernstein, 1955; Estes &

Vaughan, 1972; Shnayer, 1968) tend to show that higher interest is a potent factor in superior reading comprehension. The results of a study by Brooks (1971), however, did not demonstrate any significant difference in reading comprehension based on a comparison of scores obtained for high- and low-interest reading passages.

Statement of the Problem

This study attempted to determine if a relationship exists between reading interests and reading comprehension at the fifth-grade level. In a review of literature on studies investigating the factor of interest as it relates to reading comprehension, the studies found were comprised of populations selected from classes at the intermediate and junior-high levels; specifically, grades 4, 6, and 9.

The studies by Estes and Vaughan (1972) and Shnayer (1968) with fourth- and sixth-grade populations, respectively, demonstrated a positive relationship between the students' high interest in the reading material and greater reading comprehension. The present investigation endeavored to find if at the fifth-grade level there is not only a relationship between reading interests and reading comprehension, but if there is a significant relationship, as has been demonstrated in studies at other intermediate grade levels (fourth and

sixth). More specifically, will reading comprehension be greater on passages rated high in interest? At the same time, will reading comprehension be lower on passages rated low in interest?

Hypothesis

It was the hypothesis of this investigation that there will be a significant difference between the mean reading comprehension scores on passages rated high in interest and passages rated low in interest. Specific content interests will effect greater reading achievement for these fifth-grade students.

Importance of the Study

Any significant difference found in the role of interest favorably affecting reading comprehension would strongly indicate that further examination be given to organizational methods of teaching reading. The basal reader has traditionally been the vehicle for developing reading skills. If the data of this investigation confirms the effectiveness of interest as a strong factor in reading comprehension, it suggests that greater learning gains in reading can be achieved with greater implementation of the principles and practices of individualized instruction which allows students to select material according to interest.

Definitions of Terms

In this study, the term interest refers to the subject's subjective rating, on a 7-point interest scale, of each of the 10 reading passage topics selected for the purpose of testing reading comprehension.

The comprehension questions are of both types--literal and interpretative. Literal comprehension questions check understanding of main facts and details, and word meaning. Interpretative comprehension questions ask the reader to use skills such as selecting the main idea, making generalizations, drawing inferences, and reasoning through cause and effect relationships.

Limitations of the Study

Entire fifth-grade classes participated in the study rather than randomly selecting from among fifth-graders those who were reading at least on grade level by the end of their fifth-grade year. Including all students from each fifth-grade class was a concern of this study in that the reading materials must be readable by the majority of the subjects.

The fifth-grade child who is reading at a level much below his grade level (at a second- or third-grade reading level) may, in his attempts to identify the unfamiliar words, be hindered in his effort to read with maximum understanding.

For another part of the study population, the above-grade-level reader, the use of reading passages at grade level may not allow the factor of interest to have maximum chance of affecting comprehension of the material. Often, a good reader is highly motivated to want to perform well in a testing situation, and may score well even on passages of low interest.

A weakness of this study was the interform reliability and equivalence of the testing instrument itself. The McCall-Crabbs Standard Test Lessons in Reading, Book C, contains 78 reading selections or drill exercises. At the bottom of each reading exercise page are grade scores based on the number of questions answered correctly. The manual states, therefore, that each exercise is a standard reading test. In comparing the grade scores from selection to selection for a number of correct answers, some range of variation is found. This suggests that the reading difficulty level of the various selections in the booklet have a readability placement range from easy to more difficult fifth-grade reading levels, creating a possible limitation for this study in interform equivalence and reliability. That is, a readability grade-placement score such as 5.5 cannot be set specifically for each reading test exercise in the booklet.

A telephone interview with the test editor of

Columbia Press, publishers of the McCall-Crabbs Standard Test Lessons in Reading, revealed that Professor McCall obtained grade scores by administering the reading selections to several hundred pupils and equating the raw scores with grade-level scores on the Thorndike-McCall Reading Scale. Though the manual data are weak in establishing this criterion, it assumes that the grade scores can be used for interform reliability.

Overview of the Study

The modern trend in teaching is to meet children's needs as these are reflected in their interest patterns. Their interests can provide strong motivation to achieve in reading. To provide effective reading instruction, the teacher endeavors to make the most of an individual child's reading interests to assist him in both getting information from his reading and helping him achieve independence in reading.

This study was an investigation into the relationships between reading interests and reading comprehension as demonstrated by a group of fifth-graders who rated reading passages for interest and then were checked for comprehension of these same passages.

Past research will be presented in Chapter II. Chapter III is concerned with the procedures of the investigation. Findings of the investigation are

reported and analyzed in Chapter IV. A summary of the findings, conclusions, and recommendations is reported in Chapter V.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Countless factors are operative in comprehending reading material effectively. In testing reading comprehension, known factors that influence the reader's performance are his intelligence and vocabulary, the environmental conditions during testing, his experiential background, time limits during the testing, and the physical features and organizational form of the reading material itself.

Interest in Reading

Consideration is being given in more recent years to the influence that intrinsic factors, such as the reader's purpose and motivation for reading specific material and his interest in the content of the material, may have on reading comprehension.

In reviewing the literature for studies pertaining to interest and the role interest plays in affecting reading comprehension, two studies found reported gains in reading achievement as a result of carefully planned reading programs by teachers and librarians for individual students. An interesting observation was made of how

the factor of interest does affect growth in reading achievement in a study on the effect of a librarian-centered reading guidance program on the reading skills of fifth-graders by Cleary (1968). She reports on a comparison of the gains in reading efficiency scores achieved, in the posttesting programs, by two girls in the experimental group. The first girl, whose intelligence score was at least 10 points lower than the second girl, made a gain of several years as compared to a gain of only nine months for the second girl.

As both girls had experienced the same reading guidance program in the library, Cleary attributes the first girl's high level of reading efficiency to her exceptional interest in reading. In the reading guidance program established with the experimental group, the librarian had gathered background information about the pupils to gain a better understanding of their motivations, interests, values, and concerns in order to preplan both group and individual reading guidance programs. The first girl being interested in reading would check out several books during each library period scheduled for reading guidance and read them, whereas the other girl only occasionally charged out a book when encouraged to do so by the librarian.

Interest appeared to be a significant factor in a

study by Hogenson (1960), who hypothesized that if each student were helped to find the best possible selection of books for him and encouraged to begin an intensive program of reading, his basic reading comprehension skills would make greater gains than another student not receiving such a supplementary program.

The experimental group was composed of those students who expressed interest in improving their reading skills. Both groups selected from sixth-grade classes were similar in intelligence, reading ability, and background. The control group had the same school experiences except for the supplementary program. Using Ruth Strang's Gateway to Readable Books as a guide and information on the kinds of stories each student enjoyed reading best, careful selection procedures were used in a choice of books for each pupil in the supplementary reading program, which was established for 16 weeks.

The test data revealed significant statistical gains in comprehension for the experimental group. As expected, the control group gained the normal .4 year's growth, whereas the experimental group gained .8 year's growth in achievement--twice the average gain made by the control group. Also of significance is that a positive correlation of .70 was found to exist between the relative number of books read by the students in the

experimental group and the gains they made in improving their reading skills.

Children's Reading Interests

Dechant (1968) has summarized research about children's reading interests. He states that reading content preferences are influenced most by children's age, sex, and intelligence.

At the primary level, children like animal, nature, and adventure stories, fairy tales, comics, and how-to-do-it books. Primary girls also like stories with child characters.

In the intermediate grades, children are interested in adventure and animal stories, fantasies, stories about family life, famous people, sports, humor, personal problems, physical science, and social studies. Generally, boys are most interested in real-life adventure while girls prefer those stories dealing with home and personal problems.

Pupils in the junior high years like biography, western stories, comic books, fiction, and animal stories.

Intelligence is a major factor in determining what children will read. Generally, bright kids read much more than the average child, have a wider range of reading interests, and are usually a year or two ahead

of the average child in interest maturity.

Though a knowledge of the general trends in children's reading interests is helpful to a classroom teacher in allowing him to anticipate the interests of his students, Harris (1970) notes that there is a tremendous range of individual preferences in the specific interests they have. This knowledge, however, does not relieve him of the responsibility of endeavoring to learn the specific interests of each child.

Interests and Learning

Interest plays a decisive role in the learning of the individual, for interest motivates learning and in turn learning increases interest. A student's abilities and talents, goals, and environment affect his interest and in turn are affected by them. Interests are not only guides to learning but forms of experience through which the pupil discovers his own potentialities. The role of interest in an individual's ability to learn is dependent on the way an individual's interests function and the needs they serve.

Wilson (1971) defines interest as a kind of inclination or disposition to pay continuing attention to something and to try to enter into an active relationship with it which seems appropriate to its interesting features. If we think of children's interests as having

more relevance for education beyond increasing their motivation for learning, we may find that they will not only learn quickly what they are interested in, but that their interests are in concert with what they will learn best. In other words, expressed content interests will affect greater reading achievement.

This notion, that the presence of interest maximizes the likelihood that the learner/reader will master best what he is interested in, was expressed by Dewey in 1913. He felt that a child will put forth and sustain his greatest and best possible efforts to be successful in that with which he is interested.

Is interest in a particular area related to effective learning in that area? Some research has been undertaken to determine the extent to which interest correlates with measured achievement.

Travers (1967) reports on a study investigating the relationship between inventory measures of interest and subject-matter achievement at the college level. Though small, correlations of the order of 0.2 were found between interest and achievement.

He presents further data which found that interest measures using a population of Navy recruits showed small but positive correlations of the order of 0.2 with their grades later on in Navy training schools.

This small relationship found between interest scores and achievement scores suggests that high interest in a subject will not necessarily lead to high achievement in learning in that subject area.

Nor is a reverse relationship to be expected. High achievement does not necessarily correlate with high interest, for a student in spite of low interest may have high academic learning abilities and a general need to achieve and still obtain high grades.

Although an individual's general interests are not always reflected in his reading interests, his general interests will determine to a considerable degree what he will read, the amount he will read, and the intensity with which he will pursue reading as a satisfying activity.

Educational programs that provide opportunities for the acquiring of many varied interests are making a fundamental investment in human welfare (Jersild & Tasch, 1949). Through the process of developing interests, the child can be helped to develop a sense of his own worth, a sense of self-esteem. A youngster can make use of his particular talents and abilities to not only find a place for himself in his peer group, but at the same time he can be making important contributions to others.

In discussing the bases for effective reading,

Witty (1959) relates the case of a boy who was unable to read, though intelligent. The boy had built a model boat, and through his interest in it, Witty recorded in story form information the boy told about its construction. Word cards were made to develop word recognition, and it was not long before the boy could read back his own story. Through a process of using the boy's interest and providing orderly systematic instruction, he was able to engender an interest in reading books that gave additional information about boats. The boy was soon on the road to reading. Witty contends that interest, coupled with securely mastered skills, will provide the necessary basis for effective reading comprehension. In this case, interest did provide impetus for sustained effort and eventual success in reading.

Instances can be cited, by teachers and other adults, of individual readers who, in spite of difficulty with vocabulary in the material being read, become so absorbed in what they are reading, that their very intense interest in the content seemingly carries them through reading passages that normally would be most frustrating for them.

There are those students whose performance on reading comprehension tests shows that they are reading several levels below grade level or ought to be

considered nonreaders, and yet, surprisingly, have been successful (demonstrating the effect of interest) in reading directions for making models of things, have been able to pass a driver's test based on the manual but not comprehend material in school textbooks, and other similar activities where reading is involved.

Role of Interest in Reading Comprehension

Shnayer (1968) suggests that when a child is confronted with reading material, the somewhat unique and highly personal feelings he brings to it may be a key to what he will or will not understand. He had several hundred sixth-grade students read a number of stories that were two grades above the pupils' reading level. The students were divided into seven ability groups. The pupils rated the selections for interest and answered questions about them. Time was not a factor in the reading and testing program.

The comprehension scores from the stories rated as being of high interest were compared to scores from low-interest stories to determine the relationship between levels of interest and the comprehension of materials read by students. The differences between the scores obtained from high-interest stories and scores obtained from low-interest stories were highly significant ($p = .001$). He found that higher interest produced

greater comprehension which often enabled a child to read beyond his measured ability. Findings revealed that comprehension scores did vary as a function of both the ability of the group and of level of content interest.

Shnayer's conclusions were: (1) the comprehension of high-ability students is less affected by interest than that of average or low-ability students; (2) low interest has a negative effect on comprehension; (3) low-content interest allowed more accurate discrimination between good and poor readers than high-content interest; (4) interest, as a factor of reading comprehension, is significant to students with reading ability from two years below grade level to one year above grade level. Beyond that level, high ability is sufficient to maintain comprehension.

Results of studies designed by Bernstein (1955) with ninth-graders and Estes and Vaughan (1973) with fourth-graders both clearly showed that interest does appear to be a very potent factor in determining reading comprehension. These studies were concerned with the role interest plays in affecting reading comprehension of materials with a readability level at grade level or slightly more difficult than the pupils' grade placement.

Tests of significance showed significant differences between the high-interest and low-interest scores,

demonstrating that higher interest is concomitant with superior comprehension. In the earlier study by Bernstein, the passages were rated for interest following the reading of the selections and completion of comprehension checks, whereas in the study by Estes and Vaughan, the passages were rated for interest prior to reading the pair of selections, as they felt that one could not really know the degree to which a felt success with the passage may have been a direct cause of the higher interest rating. In a few instances, a pupil's comment to the effect that he had misrated his originally chosen high-interest passage would tend to depress the mean difference between scores on high-interest and low-interest passages as usually the score on the high-interest passage was lower. Still, though, the difference between the mean of the high-interest scores and the mean of the low-interest scores was significant.

Only in one study (Brooks, 1972) was there no statistical relationship between interest and comprehension. The population consisted only of boys selected from sixth-grade classes. The comprehension task consisted of writing in the deletions for the previously read passage as it appeared in cloze form. The main conclusion drawn was that interest may influence selection of material read, but apparently the degree of interest

does not influence degree of comprehension. Factors other than interest alone are significant in determining comprehension.

Each of these investigations is summarized in Table 1. The grade level, number of subjects in the population, and the results are included in the table for each study.

Implications for Education

The majority of these studies indicate that high-content interest does appear to be a strong factor in the comprehension of reading material.

Such significant statistical data have brought forth a number of implications by the researchers of the studies reviewed.

The finding that high interest often enables a student to read beyond his measured ability challenges the need for readability formulae. The real need may be for better ways of measuring interest rather than readability. If so, tests are needed that will weigh reader interest along with reader performance.

Secondly, even though difficulty of all passages was equal, the levels of comprehension "floated" from the independent level to the instructional level and even to what would be considered the frustrational level varying as a direct function of interest. It is

TABLE 1

DATA FROM PAST RESEARCH INVESTIGATING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INTEREST AND READING COMPREHENSION

Study	Estes and Vaughan (1973)	Brooks (1972)	Shnayer (1968)	Bernstein (1955)
Grade level	Fourth	Sixth	Sixth	Ninth
Number of subjects	46	90 (male subjects only	400+	100
Testing material administered	Stories read were slightly more difficult than pupils' grade placement	Read pair of stories at grade level	Stories were two grades above student's reading level	Two stories rewritten by study investigator (one story with much word description; other adventure type story)
Testing conditions	Passages rated for interest prior to reading the pair of selections	Comprehension task for previously read passage appeared in cloze form	Students divided into seven ability groups	Passages rated for interest following completion of comprehension task
Results	Reported significant difference	Reported no significant difference	Reported significant difference at .001 level	Reported significant difference

suggested that teachers could adjust the levels of difficulty for specific material based on knowledge of individual student's interests. Of course, this does not mean that students would read only in areas of interest, but also need to be introduced to reading material in a variety of areas. It does suggest that teachers would not expect as great comprehension in non-interest areas.

Summary

Few students enjoy reading material that taxes their skill, that is too difficult for easy reading. Material, especially in the content fields, often proves to be difficult reading matter for many pupils.

Research studies, since 1955, give evidence that the factor of interest can override difficulty in determining comprehension. A child's high interest in the content of the reading material did result in greater comprehension and often enabled a child to read beyond his measured ability.

This effect has also been studied under normal conditions and these studies reaffirm that interest is concomitant with superior comprehension. This implies that the factor of interest should be given more emphasis in testing procedures and teaching strategies.

Knowledge, both of a child's ability and interests, and general and specific reading interests, must

be considered in leading students toward successful reading experiences and increased reading achievement.

CHAPTER III

PROCEDURE

The procedure for gathering data to answer the question of whether the factor of interest does significantly affect greater reading comprehension involved the following steps:

A. Planning the research design.

B. Finding a population and gathering background.

C. Developing an interest rating inventory.

D. Selecting and administering the reading drill materials.

E. Analyzing the data statistically.

Experimental Research Design

A diagram that represents the research design of this study is shown in Figure 1.

The O signifies measurement of reading comprehension for each of the 10 passages selected and administered over a 5-day period.

The numbers signify the order of the reading selections administered. For example, Class C was tested on passages 7 and 8 on the first day, passages 9 and 10 on the second day, passages 1 and 2 on the third day,

	Testing				
Day	1	2	3	4	5
Class A	O_1 O_2	O_3 O_4	O_5 O_6	O_7 O_8	O_9 O_{10}
Class B	O_9 O_{10}	O_1 O_2	O_3 O_4	O_5 O_6	O_7 O_8
Class C	O_7 O_8	O_9 O_{10}	O_1 O_2	O_3 O_4	O_5 O_6
Class D	O_5 O_6	O_7 O_8	O_9 O_{10}	O_1 O_2	O_3 O_4
Class E	O_3 O_4	O_5 O_6	O_7 O_8	O_9 O_{10}	O_1 O_2

O signifies testing.

Figure 1. Research design.

passages 3 and 4 on the fourth day, and passages 5 and 6 on the fifth day. This counterbalance design order of test administration was to compensate for any practice effect that might occur if the 10 passages were administered in the same order to all pupils.

Population

A total of 110 fifth-grade students participated in the study. The population included five entire fifth-grade classes from three different schools (Bloomsbury, Clinton Public, and Kingwood Township Schools) in Hunterdon County, New Jersey. The three school systems serve communities which consist largely of white lower-middle and middle-class citizens. Hunterdon County is mainly a rural area with a small percentage of its families receiving a public assistance income. The median school years completed is 12.2 for residents 25 years old and over and high school graduates average slightly more than 50% of this same group as reported in the 1970 New Jersey Census data.

The classes were self-contained, although in one of the three schools some subject-matter departmentalization was in effect. However, each teacher was responsible for his or her own reading program. The basal reader approach was implemented in each class, with one exception. That one class also had an individualized reading

program in effect, operating concurrently with the basal program, and alternating on certain days of the week. The students had not used the McCall-Crabbs reading materials before, nor had any of the remedial students within the study population been exposed to the materials in their remedial reading classes.

Prior to the administration of the reading drill passages, comprehension scores from the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills were obtained to determine the mean comprehension placement of the group of pupils comprising the population. The scores were obtained in the fall of their fifth-grade year and an estimate of the mean comprehension placement was projected based on a normal expected gain of .1 year per month, for the spring of their fifth-grade year, in order to set a criterion in the selection of the reading materials to be administered for testing comprehension. The mean reading achievement grade-level score for May 1974, the testing period, was 5.9. Within each class, there appeared to be the normal range of reading abilities.

Selection and Administration of Reading Drill Exercises

Ten selections from the McCall-Crabbs Standard Test Lessons in Reading were administered by the classroom teacher. Prior to the actual testing program a set

of separate directions was given to each participating teacher. These directions included "before testing" preparations and specific procedures to be followed by the classroom teacher during the interest evaluation and comprehension check for each topic. The complete set of directions for the teacher is found in Appendix C.

The test consists of a series of five booklets, A to E. Reading passages from Book C were selected as it may be used by students in grades 4 through 6. The reading selections, as stated in the manual, have been carefully prepared by experienced authors who based their choice of materials on children's interests and capacities at the grade level for which the book is intended. Book C is intended for readers with average fifth-grade reading abilities. The manual further states that each reading drill lesson contains a few test items difficult enough to challenge the best readers and some easy enough for less able readers.

Utilization was made of the comprehension questions that accompany each reading selection. These multiple-choice questions require reading for stated fact, main idea, and inference.

Now in its third edition, and although it has changed little since the first edition in 1926, the test manual states that the series is the product of rigorous

criticism, experimentation, and years of practical use. A discussion of interform reliability and equivalence as it pertains to the reading passages in the McCall-Crabbs Standard Test Lessons in Reading may be found in Chapter I under limitations of the study.

Construction of Interest Rating Inventory

Prior to reading each selection, determination of the measure of interest was achieved by means of a rating scale. Each student was asked to indicate by placing a check mark whether he liked or disliked the topic of the selection. The interest rating scale is shown in Figure 2. Two selections per day were read by each student and comprehension checks administered.

Treatment of Data

A *t* test was employed to find if the mean reading comprehension grade-level scores for high-interest passages were significantly different from the mean reading comprehension grade-level scores for low-interest passages. The data were compared in the following ways to answer the question as to whether a significant relationship, statistically, does exist between interest patterns and achievement in reading.

First, the main analysis compared the mean grade-level score for all passages rated high in interest to

____ (1) Like very, very much

____ (2) Like quite a lot

____ (3) Like a little

____ (4) Neutral (neither like nor dislike)

____ (5) Dislike a little

____ (6) Dislike quite a lot

____ (7) Dislike very, very much

Figure 2. Interest rating scale.

the mean grade-level score for all passages rated low in interest for the entire population of 110 fifth-grade pupils. The mean high-interest score computed included all scores for those passage topics receiving either ratings 1, 2, or 3 ("like" ratings) on the interest inventory scale. The mean low-interest score computed included all scores for those passage topics marked with a 5, 6, or 7 rating ("dislike" ratings). A *t* test between the mean high-interest score and the mean low-interest score determined if the scores were significantly different from each other. Also obtained for purposes of comparison to the two preceding mean scores for the testing population was the mean grade reading achievement score for the passages receiving a neutral rating (neither liked nor disliked the topic theme).

As findings in the review of literature did reveal that comprehension scores in the Shnayer (1968) study varied as a function of level of content interest, it was thought that a comparison of mean comprehension grade-level scores between passages receiving the highest "liked" interest rating (liked very, very much) on the interest inventory scale and passages receiving the lowest "disliked" interest rating (disliked very, very much) on the interest scale would reveal a greater significant difference than that of results obtained for

comparisons of mean grade-level scores between the mean high-interest score (including all three degrees of "liked" ratings) and the mean low-interest score (including all three degrees of "disliked" ratings) for the test population. In order to find if a greater significant difference did indeed exist, a *t* test was employed between the mean grade-level scores for the highest "liked" passages and the lowest "disliked" passages.

Secondly, each of the 10 reading selections was analyzed in terms of interest and comprehension to find if the data were consistent for each story with that for the high- and low-interest scores for the total population. A *t* test determined if there was a significant difference between the mean high-interest reading score (receiving a rating of 1, 2, or 3) and the mean low-interest reading score (receiving a rating of 5, 6, or 7) for any of the 10 McCall-Crabb passages.

Another comparison of mean grade-level scores for each story passage compared the mean grade-level score for the highest "liked" rating to the mean grade-level score for the lowest "disliked" rating. A *t* test determined if differences between the mean scores were significant; that is, if differences between wider degrees of interest rating intensity would result in greater comprehension.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Textbook discussions on good reading programs emphasize a vital relationship between interest patterns and progress in reading. These interest patterns can provide strong motivation to achieve in reading.

The purpose of this chapter is to analyze the data derived from the study in relation to the hypothesis presented in Chapter I. The hypothesis of this investigation was that such a relationship between interest patterns and reading achievement exists and would be demonstrated statistically.

The results are presented in two parts. The first part analyzes total group high-interest scores to total group low-interest scores for the entire study population. The second part analyzes the high- and low-interest scores for each of the 10 story selections. Finally, the results of both sections will be related to pertinent literature.

Total Group Interest Scores for the Entire Population

The main analysis was concerned with comparisons of test mean grade-level scores between high- and low-

interest passages for the entire study population. The hypothesis stated that there would be a significant difference between the mean high-interest and mean low-interest grade-level scores. The hypothesis was negated. Interest did not appear to have an effect on comprehension as measured by the McCall-Crabbs Reading Lessons passages.

Table 2 summarizes the mean grade-level scores for the total number of observations for both "liked" and "disliked" passages. The total number of observations for "liked" passages includes all the scores for those topics receiving a rating of 1, 2, or 3 (some degree of "like" interest in the topic). All the scores for those topics receiving a rating of 5, 6, or 7 (some degree of "dislike" interest in the topic) are included in the total number of observations for "disliked" passages. Very little difference appeared between the mean raw scores. Consequently, the hypothesis was rejected.

A secondary analysis for the total population was a comparison of mean grade-level test scores for passages rated as liked very, very much (the highest "liked" rating) with passages rated as disliked very, very much (the lowest "disliked" rating). The mean grade-level scores for the total number of observations for these two values are found in Table 3.

TABLE 2

MEAN READING COMPREHENSION GRADE-LEVEL SCORES FOR LIKED VERSUS DISLIKED PASSAGES USING TOP THREE AND BOTTOM THREE INTEREST RATINGS (N = 110)

Interest rating	Number of observations	$\bar{M}$	S.D.	Difference between means*
Total "liked" passages	563	7.15	1.59	.09
Total "disliked" passages	274	7.06	1.78	

*No level of significance is indicated by the data.

Note. Total "liked" passages include ratings 1, 2, and 3 on the interest inventory scale.

Total "disliked" passages include ratings 5, 6, and 7 on the interest inventory scale.

TABLE 3

MEAN READING COMPREHENSION GRADE-LEVEL SCORES FOR LIKED VERSUS DISLIKED PASSAGES USING ONLY HIGHEST AND LOWEST INTEREST RATINGS (N = 110)

Interest rating	Number of observations	$\bar{M}$	S.D.	Difference between means*
Total passages rated "liked very, very much" (interest rating one)	204	7.03	1.55	.33
Total passages rated "disliked very, very much" (interest rating seven)	136	6.70	1.86	

*No level of significance is indicated by the data.

The results show a slight difference between high, intensely liked passage scores and low, intensely disliked passage scores, but the difference is not statistically significant ($p = 0.075$). The data indicate that the interest variable is not significantly related to reading achievement. The hypothesis was not supported by these findings.

Interest Score Results for Each Story Selection

The analysis of data for each of the 10 story passages was concerned with the same comparisons of test mean grade-level scores as that for the entire study population. Story themes are listed in Appendix A.

Mean grade-level scores and their respective standard deviations, computed to determine whether a significant relationship, statistically, might exist between high interest in content and superior comprehension for any particular story are summarized in Table 4. All high-interest scores (receiving a rating of 1, 2, or 3) for any passage were compared to that same passage's total low-interest scores (rated 5, 6, or 7). High-interest scores are included in the total number of observations for "liked" ratings while low-interest scores are included in the total number of observations for "disliked" ratings for any particular story. No significant

TABLE 4

MEAN READING COMPREHENSION GRADE-LEVEL SCORES AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR EACH OF THE TEN PASSAGES USING TOP THREE AND BOTTOM THREE INTEREST RATINGS[a]
(N = 110)

Story theme	Number of observations for "liked"	Mean	S.D.	Number of observations for "disliked" ratings	Mean	S.D.	Difference between means*
AA	65	6.27	1.54	27	6.04	1.25	+.23
BB	63	8.08	2.09	16	8.93	2.53	-.85
CC	66	6.22	1.18	25	6.44	1.00	-.22
DD	38	7.70	2.26	44	7.70	2.13	.00
EE	67	6.51	1.50	15	5.75	1.89	+.76
FF	34	7.07	0.75	53	6.97	1.12	+.10
GG	63	7.70	1.58	24	7.78	2.11	-.08
HH	62	7.41	0.93	17	6.88	1.23	+.53
II	24	6.98	1.16	45	7.00	1.35	-.02
JJ	81	7.60	1.00	8	6.86	2.36	+.74

[a]Appendix A lists the story passage themes (represented by letters in this table) as given on the interest rating inventory for each passage.

*No level of significance is indicated by the data.

Note. "Liked" ratings include ratings 1, 2, and 3 on the interest inventory scale. "Disliked" ratings include ratings 5, 6, and 7 on the interest scale.

difference in mean scores for any one of the 10 selections was found between high- and low-interest values. The results offered no support for the hypothesis.

The last comparison of test mean grade-level scores for each story passage separately was between scores receiving the "liked very, very much" rating (rating 1 on the interest inventory scale) and those scores receiving the "disliked very, very much" rating (rating 7 on the interest inventory scale). Table 5 summarizes the mean grade-level scores and their respective standard deviations for each selection. The results show a statistical significant interaction between interest and comprehension for story passages EE and JJ, but analysis of mean differences for the other eight stories reject the main hypothesis.

Discussion

This study attempted to determine if interest is a strong factor in comprehension. Test data, in this investigation, suggest that interest is not a decisive determining factor in affecting high achievement in reading.

The hypothesis was negated upon an analysis of mean grade-level score comparisons, both for the total group population and for each reading passage. The data showed no significant differences between mean high- and

TABLE 5

MEAN READING COMPREHENSION GRADE-LEVEL SCORES AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR EACH OF THE TEN PASSAGES USING ONLY HIGHEST AND LOWEST INTEREST RATINGS[a]
(N = 110)

Story theme	Number of observations for highest "liked" rating	Mean	S.D.	Number of observations for lowest "disliked" rating	Mean	S.D.	Difference between means
AA	30	6.14	1.36	13	5.75	1.30	+.39
BB	24	7.80	2.21	7	8.16	3.19	-.36
CC	24	6.00	1.17	13	6.22	1.10	-.22
DD	16	7.31	2.07	23	7.52	2.28	-.21
EE	24	6.78	1.38	7	4.56	1.89	+2.22*
FF	10	7.17	0.84	27	6.59	1.20	+.58
GG	22	7.39	1.44	11	7.18	2.37	+.21
HH	23	7.25	1.03	5	7.10	0.89	+.15
II	2	6.85	1.34	28	6.83	1.33	+.02
JJ	29	7.73	0.86	2	4.80	2.12	+2.93**

[a]Appendix A lists the story passage themes (represented by letters in this table) as given on the interest rating inventory for each passage.

*Significant at the 0.002 level.

**Significant at the 0.001 level.

Note. Highest "liked" rating--liked very, very much. Lowest "disliked" rating--disliked very, very much.

low-interest scores except for two story passages found to be significant at the .002 and .001 levels. This significance was obtained in a comparison of the mean high-intensity interest score (rating 1) and the mean low-intensity interest score (rating 7).

In reexamining the data to determine possible reasons why the results of this study failed to be in agreement with those studies that did support the hypothesis, the most evident characteristic of the scores of each fifth-grader in the testing population appears to be the consistent high-level performance of reading achievement. Whether the student was above average, average, or below average in ability for comprehending material at his grade-level placement (fifth-grade material was used for testing), the mean overall reading performance of each student tested on 10 story passages appeared to be somewhat higher than the reading grade-level score obtained from standardized tests (Iowa Test of Basic Skills) given during his fifth-grade school year.

The mean reading achievement score obtained for the testing population for May of their fifth-grade year was 5.9, whereas the mean scores on the 10 McCall-Crabbs test passages were 7.15 for high-interest passages, 7.06 for low-interest passages, and 7.34 for passages rated neutral. It appears that the higher test scores on the

McCall-Crabbs Standard Test Lessons in Reading may be inaccurate when compared to Iowa reading achievement scores.

Each of the mean scores for the three main interest groups (high, low, and neutral) is one whole year higher in reading achievement than the students' grade placement. The test scores on the McCall-Crabbs passages suggest that the use of Book C, though meant for testing at the fifth-grade level, was inappropriate. Perhaps the factor of interest might have had more chance of affecting comprehension if Book D (sixth-grade level) of the McCall-Crabbs Standard Test Lessons in Reading had been utilized as this next level of reading material would have been slightly more difficult for these end-of-the year fifth-graders.

As the testing situation for this investigation was comparable to regular achievement testing situations established by their classroom teachers, many students may have felt an inner need to achieve and therefore did their best. The mean grade-level score for the total population for high-interest passages (7.15) was close to the mean grade-level score for low-interest passages (7.06). The small difference, .09, between the two means demonstrates that interest was not the overriding factor expected.

An interesting observation can be seen when the mean grade-level score for the total passages rated neutral (7.34) is compared to the mean for high-interest passages (7.15) and the mean score for low-interest passages (7.06) for the total population. Interest was not relevant as a factor in the mean reading comprehension score for neutrally rated passages. In spite of some 200 passages rated as being of neutral interest (rating 4 on the interest inventory scale--neither liked nor disliked), a mean even higher than the mean for total liked passages was obtained. It would appear that achievement can still be high even when students have neutral feelings about reading material content.

Inspection of Table 4, which summarizes the mean grade-level scores for each of the 10 story selections, shows that high interest in a particular topic did not result in an appreciable difference between high- and low-interest scores for any of the selections. In fact, for almost half of the stories (BB, CC, GG, and II), the mean grade-level scores for those stories receiving a rating of 5, 6, or 7, indicating dislike for the story theme, were slightly higher than the mean grade-level scores for these same stories when rated 1, 2, or 3, indicating a liking for the story topic. For one of these stories, DD, the means were the same with no

difference between them.

As indicated in the review of literature, there are a number of determinants of achievement in reading. The reader's intellectual, physical, social, and emotional development, general language proficiency, and sensory equipment are interrelated factors which contribute to success in reading. A wide experiential background, a genuine interest in reading, and adequate instructional preparation play their part in determining reading achievement. Bond and Tinker (1967) believe that no one single factor determines a youngster's success in reading.

In diagnostic studies of children with poor reading ability, the attempt to find a single factor which would explain the reading failure is a vain endeavor in the majority of cases. Usually several factors are found to be closely interrelated to reading disability. The more comprehensive the case study, the greater the number of significant causal factors discovered.

A study of first-grade children by Malmquist is summarized in Harris' book (1970) on How to Increase Reading Ability. On the basis of the results, the most significant factors in the development of a child's reading ability seemed to be intelligence; ability to concentrate, persistence, self-confidence, and emotional

stability; spelling ability, visual perception, social status, and educational level of the parents; and the teaching experience of the child's teacher.

It would seem that a number of the closely interrelated aforementioned factors, rather than any one single factor, played the important role in the comprehension scores obtained.

Perhaps for some students, the ones with higher reading ability, in this investigation, their genuine interest in reading itself outweighed any expressed interest in a specific reading theme or content. In the development of their reading progress, as they gained the necessary skills to use reading both for enjoyment and to gain information, reading itself became a satisfying activity. The more reading satisfies, the greater is the tendency to read, thereby increasing reading ability.

Often lack of interest is used as an excuse for poor comprehension. In her study investigating the relationship between interest and comprehension, Brooks (1972) says that lack of interest in reading materials as a reason for the lack of comprehension may be just an excuse. As the findings of the present investigation agreed with the results reported by Brooks, though not confirmed by other studies, it would appear that lack of

interest cannot be entirely, nor justly blamed, for poor achievement in reading.

The lack of any statistical difference between interest and reading achievement is not entirely unexpected for that research summarized by Travers (1967) which has been undertaken to determine the extent to which interest is related to achievement showed that a small relationship (correlations of the order of 0.2) has been found between interest and achievement scores.

Reading interest patterns do provide information as to what children will read, but apparently are not, as shown in the data from this study, significant in determining comprehension. Present data suggest that comprehension is affected by factors in addition to interest and that all factors known to play a role in affecting superior reading achievement be considered.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study explored the role of interest as a possible factor in affecting superior reading comprehension. The major problem was to determine if, as has been demonstrated in the Bernstein (1955), Estes and Vaughan (1972), and Shnayer (1968) studies, a positive relationship between interest and comprehension would exist at the fifth-grade level.

Summary

One hundred and ten subjects, all students from three different schools in Hunterdon County, New Jersey, participated in the study's testing program. Five fifth-grade classes were involved in comprehension checks for each of 10 narrative style selections administered by their classroom teachers.

The chief material used was the McCall-Crabbs Standard Test Lessons in Reading, Book C, which contains both the passage and the questions for checking comprehension on the same page of the booklet. An accompanying instrument, for measuring each student's interest rating

in a particular selection, was constructed and used. These materials were administered in counterbalance design to offset any practice effect in taking the tests.

Total group high-interest scores were compared to total group low-interest scores. Total group high-interest scores were comprised of scores receiving an interest rating of one of the top three "like" ratings on the interest scale. Total group low-interest scores were comprised of scores receiving an interest rating of one of the bottom three "dislike" ratings on the scale. Also compared were total group scores for all passages receiving an interest rating of one, the most intense liked rating, with total group scores for passages rated seven, the most intense disliked rating.

High- and low-interest scores for each of the 10 story selections were also examined to determine if a positive relationship between interest and comprehension might be found for any particular story. The high-interest scores (stories rated 1, 2, or 3) were compared to low-interest scores (stories rated 5, 6, or 7) for each passage, and scores receiving the most intense "liked" rating (1 on the rating scale) were compared to scores receiving the most intense "disliked" rating (7 on the rating scale).

A t test for the differences between the means

of the scores for each of these comparisons made was conducted.

The hypothesis that there would be a significant difference between the mean high-interest and low-interest grade-level scores, thereby reaffirming the results of the three studies that found interest to be a strong factor in reading achievement, was negated. The mean scores for total group comparisons revealed no significant differences. Nor did a comparison of mean scores for individual stories reveal a level of significance. But, when data for comparison of the mean high interest score (rating 1) and the mean low-interest score (rating 7) for individual stories were computed, a level of significance was obtained for two stories. However, the number of passages receiving the low-intense rating in the comparison of means is quite small, and the statistical difference should be viewed with caution.

It should be noted that the mean reading comprehension scores for each of the three main interest groups (high, low, neutral) was a year higher in reading achievement than both the students' grade placement and the mean reading grade-level score obtained from the standardized reading test given during their fifth-grade school year. It appears that the scores on the McCall-Crabbs test passages may be inaccurate and/or the level of the reading

test material may have been inappropriate for students in May of their fifth-grade school year.

Conclusions

Results of this investigation show that expressed interest apparently is not a factor in affecting reading comprehension. The mean scores were too close to each other to be significant statistically. It had been hypothesized that a positive relationship existed between reading interests and reading comprehension. However, the data did not support the hypothesis.

Despite statements and results of other studies that have indicated interest affects how well a reader comprehends and that how well a reader comprehends is affected by his interest in the content of reading material, the present investigation did not show that interesting reading material is comprehended any better than less interesting material. Scores showed that effective reading comprehension could result regardless of whether the material is interesting.

Recommendations

This investigation did not indicate that interest plays a significant role in affecting superior reading achievement. More investigation is needed to determine what factors are strongly related to comprehension

besides intelligence.

Another recommendation for further research is the need to investigate purpose for reading as an influencing factor in reading comprehension.

The results of this study suggest that there is a need for more studies in this area at other grade levels utilizing different test material selections and topics.

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APPENDIX A

STORY PASSAGE THEMES SELECTED FROM THE McCALL-CRABBS STANDARD TEST LESSONS IN READING, BOOK C

AA--Lou Gehrig, famous baseball player

BB--making a tiny garden

CC--World War II human interest story

DD--romantic tale about an Indian maiden

EE--oldest living things

FF--making stuffed dates (fruit)

GG--a snake story

HH--the Statue of Liberty

II--helping rid cities of unnecessary beggars

JJ--animals do strange and unusual things

APPENDIX B

COPY OF EACH OF THE TEN McCALL-CRABBS

STANDARD TEST LESSONS IN

READING PASSAGES

He was one of the greatest baseball players of all time. Twice he was named the most valuable player of the year in the American League. The New York Yankees, with him as their captain, won three World Series.

His fame did not come the easy way. It took great effort, since he had a clumsy body to begin with, to become a fine first baseman. A wild pitch knocked him unconscious, but he was in the line-up next day. One by one he broke all ten fingers, but he played on. His bones might be broken, or he might be ill, but always he would be in there playing. Lou Gehrig, the Iron Horse, as they called him, played 2130 games without skipping one.

Then, one day, he stood for the last time on the diamond where he had won his greatest triumphs. It was Lou Gehrig Day. Gifts were presented from all the baseball world. Lou bowed his head to the thunderous applause, while his famous pal, Babe Ruth, stood with his arm about him.

1. How many times was Lou Gehrig named the year's star American League Player? (a) one (b) two (c) three (d) four

2. Each of the three years his team won the World Series, he was (a) catcher (b) pitcher (c) second baseman (d) captain

3. He became a fine first baseman (a) naturally (b) by long training (c) by great effort (d) with physical strength

4. Lou Gehrig showed (a) modesty (b) pride (c) conceit (d) confidence

5. This player was given the title of (a) Old Stalwart (b) Old Faithful (c) Old Ironsides (d) Iron Horse

6. Lou Gehrig's fellow players gave him a special title in (a) admiration (b) loyalty (c) fear (d) envy

7. Gehrig's record of consecutive games played was (a) 213 (b) 2000 (c) 2030 (d) 2130

8. Lou's home diamond was in (a) New York (b) Cincinnati (c) St. Louis (d) Chicago

No. right	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
G score	3.2	3.4	3.7	4.0	4.4	5.1	6.2	7.6	9.4

Would you like to have a tiny garden--a garden grown in a bowl or a small box--a real growing garden with moss, plants, flowers, and perhaps a lake? First collect the following articles: fresh mold, a few pebbles, some coral or shells, a piece of a mirror, a small trowel, and a deep bowl or a neat wooden box.

Place the pebbles in the bottom of the bowl or box. On top of the pebbles put the fresh mold, with the finest earth on the surface. Plant in your garden a tiny cactus, fern, or any small, neatly growing plants. The earth should be pressed down firmly, but not too hard, with the handle of your trowel.

To make your garden complete, shape a little earth into a hill. At the foot of the hill, place the mirror with the shells and coral around it, thus making a little lake.

1. These paragraphs tell how to make a (a) lake (b) box (c) hill (d) garden

2. In the bottom of the box or bowl place (a) pebbles (b) shells (c) coral (d) a mirror

3. To make this garden we must first (a) plant the plants (b) place earth in the bowl (c) press the earth down (d) collect all the articles

4. The mirror is used to make a (a) lake (b) hill (c) trowel (d) hole

5. The garden is (a) large (b) out of doors (c) a real garden (d) a play garden

6. The earth is pressed down with the (a) shells (b) hands (c) mirror (d) trowel

7. Fresh mold is (a) bright pebbles (b) earth (c) plants (d) moss

8. The finest earth is put (a) in the bottom (b) around the lake (c) on the surface (d) in the hill

9. The earth is pressed down (a) very hard (b) very little (c) firmly (d) lightly

No. right	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
G score	2.8	3.4	4.1	4.9	5.8	6.8	7.9	9.3	11.1	13.4

The Netherlands had been conquered by the Germans. Many patriots left their homes in the Netherlands and went into hiding in order to fight the Germans. Occasionally, at night, they would slip back to visit their families. When they did so, there was always danger that their very young children would babble to the German police.

A clever Netherlander badly wanted by the police taught his baby son to speak his first two words: "Pappie dood," which means, "Daddy is dead."

One day the police surrounded the house. One gave the babby a ride on his knees and asked, "When did you last see Daddy?" The baby answered, "Pappie dood!" Another gave the baby some candy and asked, "Where is your father?" "Pappie dood!" As they angrily departed, the child sucked the candy and called, "Pappie dood!"

1. This story tells how an infant protected (a) his father (b) his mother (c) his father's son (d) the German police

2. The baby in this story said, "Pappie dood" to (a) just his father (b) the police only (c) the Germans only (d) everyone

3. The patriot was a (a) Netherlander (b) German (c) child (d) policeman

4. The first officer gave the baby a (a) bit of candy (b) whistle (c) toy (d) ride

5. When the officers left the baby, he (a) cried (b) called, "Pappie dood" (c) [illegible] the candy (d) laughed happily

6. The police left this home (a) laughingly (b) angrily (c) quickly (d) very slowly

7. How many words did the patriot teach his son to speak? (a) two (b) four (c) six (d) eight

8. The baby had a ride on whose knees? (a) his father's (b) a Netherlander's (c) a German's (d) his mother's

9. The German police were (a) successful (b) thwarted (c) aided (d) thanked

No. right	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
G score	3.5	3.8	4.2	4.5	4.9	5.4	5.9	6.4	7.0	8.0

This is a true tale about a lovely Choctaw maiden, Cateechee, who was a captive of the Cherokees, and a white youth, Allan. The youth, who lived with his parents at Fort Newcomb in South Carolina, often went with his father to trade with the Cherokee Indians at their town of Keowee. Allan and Cateechee fell in love with each other. Chief Kuruga did not like this; he planned to make Cateechee one of his many wives.

As revenge, Kuruga and his warriors plotted to kill the white pioneers at Fort Newcomb and seize all the goods in it. Cateechee learned of this plan just as the Indians were getting ready to start for the fort. She leapt on a fast horse and raced toward Allan, ninety-six miles away. Kuruga and his warriors chased her, but her horse outran them. Cateechee gave the warning, and thus saved Allan and the other pioneers.

Allan married Cateechee, and the white people, in gratitude, changed the name of Fort Newcomb to Fort Ninety-Six.

1. Which is the best title for this story? (a) Allan (b) Cateechee (c) Kuruga and Keowee (d) How Fort Ninety-Six Got Its Name
2. Who was a Cherokee? (a) Kuruga (b) Cateechee (c) Allan (d) Newcomb
3. Allan's father went to Keowee to (a) ride (b) trade (c) see Cateechee (d) fight Indians
4. The white people lived at (a) Keowee (b) Choctaw (c) Fort Newcomb (d) Kuruga
5. Who hated the white people? (a) Cateechee (b) Kuruga (c) Allan (d) Newcomb
6. Kuruga wanted (a) Cateechee (b) Allan (c) Allan's father (d) a Cherokee
7. Who were in love with each other? (a) Kuruga and Cateechee (b) Allan and a Choctaw (c) Allan and a Cherokee (d) Allan's father and Cateechee
8. Who chased Cateechee? (a) a Choctaw (b) a white man (c) Cherokees (d) Allan
9. How did Cateechee travel to the fort? (a) on foot (b) in a car (c) on horseback (d) in a canoe

No. right	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
G score	1.8	3.7	4.8	5.3	5.8	6.6	7.9	9.0	9.8	10.5

For centuries historians and scientists have been searching for the oldest living thing. Some turtles live more than a century. But the oldest living things we know are trees.

There are sequoia trees growing in California which sprouted 1000 B.C. Many of them are still healthy and may live to be the oldest things living on earth. For a long time they were thought to be the oldest, but recently a bristlecone pine, found in California at an elevation of 10,000 feet, showed 4600 rings. This tells us that the three is 4600 years old. In other words, it sprouted about the time Abraham left the city of Ur--one of the first towns ever built in the world.

Scientists are searching for the oldest tree alive because it can teach them a great deal about many matters. It will tell them about the climate during the past thousands of years. The amount of rainfall each year is told by the size of each ring. Also, by matching rings in an old tree with those in trees cut and used by Indians who once lived nearby, it is possible to learn how long ago Indians lived in various areas.

1. The best title for this story is (a) Sequoia Trees (b) The Oldest Living Thing (c) The Oldest Trees (d) Tree Growth in California
2. This selection is mostly about (a) turtles (b) Indians (c) the largest trees (d) the oldest living things
3. Bristlecone pines were found at (a) sea level (b) 1000 feet (c) 10,000 feet (d) 100,000 feet
4. A tree's history is revealed by its (a) height (b) bark (c) rings (d) foliage
5. An ancient tree is one of the best aids we know in studying the (a) history of California (b) history of forestry (c) history of weather (d) story of our Indians
6. We are seeking to find the oldest tree alive because it will be (a) the largest (b) the heaviest (c) a good museum piece (d) a source of climate records
7. A growth ring can tell us (a) the type of tree (b) the amount of sun for a given year (c) whether a tree is living or dead (d) the amount of rainfall each year
8. Which started first? (a) this pine (b) Ur (c) you (d) I

No. right	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
G score	1.8	2.6	4.4	5.3	5.7	6.2	7.0	7.9	8.7

Um! Better than Candy! Stuffed Dates!

1 pound dates
1/2 cup nut meats
1/2 cup raisins
1/2 cup sugar

Wash the dates in cold water. After they are clean and dry, remove the stones by cutting a slit in one side with a knife. Wash the nut meats and raisins; dry on a clean cloth. Put the nuts and raisins in a wooden bowl and chop fine. Fill the dates with the chopped nuts and raisins. Put the sugar in a clean paper bag. Drop in the stuffed dates a few at a time and shake them until they are coated with sugar.

These dates would be very nice to have for a party. Almost everyone likes them.

1. Which of these is not needed? (a) dates (b) sugar (c) butter (d) nuts
2. It says that stuffed dates are better than (a) candy (b) nuts (c) raisins (d) prunes
3. Of which will you need the most? (a) nuts (b) raisins (c) sugar (d) dates
4. Wash the dates in (a) cold water (b) warm water (c) salted water (d) a wooden bowl
5. Put the nuts in the wooden bowl to (a) wash them (b) chop them (c) sugar them (d) stuff them
6. Put the sugar in (a) a wooden bowl (b) a clean cloth (c) a paper bag (d) cold water
7. Where do you put the raisins and nuts? (a) beside the dates (b) outside the dates (c) around the dates (d) inside the dates
8. These would be nice for (a) breakfast (b) a party (c) sick people (d) babies
9. Wash, dry, and chop the (a) dates (b) raisins (c) sugar (d) candy
10. Choose the best title: (a) A Recipe for Stuffed Dates (b) Fun at a Party (c) Nutty Flavor (d) Swell "Stuff"!
11. It is suggested that (a) all children like dates (b) stuffed dates contain nuts and raisins (c) stuffed dates are healthful (d) stuffed dates are good for parties

No. right	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
G score	3.5	3.9	4.3	4.6	5.0	5.4	5.7	6.1	6.5	6.9	7.4	7.9

Among my many friends on the farm were several snakes. Hisser, a spreading adder, was one of them. He wasn't very wise, for the first time I saw him his head was stuck in a spider's web. He was hanging with only a few inches of his tail touching the ground. Probably the spider didn't like it when I freed Hisser from the web. As for Hisser, he spread his neck, opened his mouth to bite, and hissed like an angry goose.

Some weeks later, I sat down on a log to rest. Hearing a little sound in the leaves behind me, I turned around. There lay Hisser. When I moved, he made off into nearby weeds.

That winter I started to dig a hole in which to plant a nut tree. When I pushed a shovel into the ground, I heard a strange sound. I looked around me but could not see what had made the sound. I pushed the shovel into the earth again, and again I heard that strange sound. It was not caused by dry seed pods, or anything in the nearby bushes, or something in the pockets of my leather jacket. I felt puzzled. I pushed the shovel into the ground again and lifted out more earth. This time the sound was louder and three inches of a snake showed. It was Hisser. He had eaten the chipmunk that made the hole, and had gone to bed there for the winter. I covered him up for his long sleep.

1. This story is mainly about a (a) snake (b) spider (c) nut tree (d) chipmunk
2. How many times was the snake seen? (a) one (b) two (c) three (d) four
3. The snake was first seen in a (a) web (b) tree (c) hole (d) bush
4. Which rested on a log? The (a) spider (b) snake (c) writer (d) chipmunk
5. What made the writer feel puzzled? The (a) shovel (b) coat (c) seed pods (d) sound
6. What did the spreading adder sound like? (a) chipmunk (b) spider (c) leather coat (d) goose
7. How many times was the shovel pushed into the ground? (a) one (b) two (c) three (d) four
8. What hissed? (a) goose (b) spider (c) man (d) snake

No. right	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
G score	1.8	3.4	4.4	5.0	5.5	6.0	6.9	8.2	9.7

On an island in New York harbor is a lady holding a torch high over her head. She is not a real live lady, but a statue. She is called the Statue of Liberty.

There are small boats which are used only to take visitors to and from the island. People climb a winding stair inside the Statue of Liberty and look out over the harbor from the crown on her head. Forty persons can stand in her head at one time. She is about fifteen times as high as the wall of your schoolroom.

This statue was a gift to the United States from the people of France to celebrate our one hundredth birthday as a nation.

1. The statue was probably made (a) in New York City (b) on an island (c) in France (d) in the water
2. Visitors reach the statue (a) by train (b) by swimming (c) by boat (d) by climbing
3. The statue is owned by (a) the United States (b) France (c) England (d) New York
4. The stairs of the statue are (a) crooked (b) fifteen feet long (c) inside the statue (d) over her head
5. The Statue of Liberty was (a) given to France (b) bought by the United States (c) bought by New York (d) given to the United States
6. How high is the statue? (a) 15 feet (b) 100 feet (c) about 15 times as high as your schoolroom (d) about 100 times as high as your schoolroom
7. On the head of the statue is (a) her hand (b) a torch (c) a crown (d) a stairway
8. People climb to the top of the statue (a) because the stairs wind (b) to look over the harbor (c) to see how big it is (d) to stand in the head
9. Inside the head there is room for (a) one person (b) two or three people (c) forty people (d) one hundred people
10. The torch is (a) on the statue's head (b) at the top of the stairs (c) in front of the statue (d) in the hand

No. right	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
G score	2.8	3.3	3.9	4.5	5.0	5.5	6.0	6.5	7.1	7.7	8.2

Many years ago a laborer sat down to rest on the sidewalk in a metropolitan district. He took off his hat, held it upside down in his hand and started to snooze. Passers-by started dropping money into the hat. When he awoke he found in the hat more money than he had earned during the day as a laborer. He became a professional beggar, and was thenceforth able to afford the luxuries of life before unknown to him.

This kind of giving encourages laziness, and robs deserving people of needed aid. It is much better that needy cases be referred to an organization where they will be cared for and given work with a chance to regain their self-respect. If we mass our contributions and give to organized charities, we will help rid our city of the unnecessary beggar, and may be sure that truly needy cases are being cared for.

1. This man sat down to rest in a (a) suburb (b) small town (c) country district (d) large city

2. The beggar receives much money because (a) people are sympathetic (b) he won't work (c) it is easier to beg than to work (d) he blocks our way

3. The selection is chiefly about (a) the unnecessary beggar (b) the value of charities (c) the laborer (d) needy cases

4. This man became a beggar by (a) chance (b) training (c) great need (d) force

5. This kind of giving encourages (a) desire for luxury (b) effort (c) contentment (d) laziness

6. What is the most useful thing to do for a needy person? (a) supply food (b) provide shelter (c) give money (d) provide work

7. Prior to following his present career, the man had been (a) a beggar (b) a laborer (c) needy (d) dishonest

8. We can rid our city of this menace by (a) giving to persons we know to be needy (b) referring needy cases to organizations (c) giving to beggars (d) giving to anyone who asks

No. right	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
G score	4.4	4.9	5.4	5.9	6.4	7.0	7.8	8.6	9.8

Keller and Marian Breland have a most unusual zoo in Arkansas. In it is a chicken that pecks three times if one asks how much is 21 divided by 7, and four times if one asks what the square root of 16 is. Turkeys run toy trains and pigs pick up clothes and put them in a laundry hamper. Foxes jump for grapes, and porpoises leap through hoops, play catch, and toss a baseball through a basket. They squeal with disappointment when the ball fails to go through. The Brelands claim that apes learn most quickly, and that other animals learn in this order: monkey, raccoon, porpoise, pig, dog, cat, crow, parakeet, parrot, cow, sheep, horse, hamster, rabbit, and squirrel.

Animals do strange things in Florida also. A wild alligator entered the town of Homestead. Some people who saw him thought he wanted to mail a letter, but he passed right by the post office. Then they guessed he had come to town on a shopping spree, for he stopped to look through a store window at an alligator bag. Finally, he was captured by a bystander and taken to the police station. The name of the bystander is not known, for only the alligator was booked.

1. Two main thoughts are about (a) animals in an unusual zoo (b) an unusual zoo and a wild alligator (c) the Brelands (d) intelligent animals and an ordinary zoo
2. The toy trains are run by (a) turkeys (b) foxes (c) apes (d) monkeys
3. What pecks four times when asked for the square root of sixteen? (a) turkey (b) crow (c) chicken (d) parrot
4. This selection is (a) educational and fictitious (b) humorous and fictitious (c) fictitious and true (d) educational and humorous
5. Foxes (a) run toy trains (b) put clothes in a laundry hamper (c) leap through hoops (d) jump for grapes
6. Which one of these animals learns most quickly? (a) parakeet (b) parrot (c) monkey (d) dog
7. What did the alligator see in the store window? (a) toy trains (b) baby alligators (c) alligator bag (d) grapes
8. Which was wild? (a) pig (b) dog (c) cat (d) alligator

No. right	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
G score	2.0	3.3	5.2	5.8	6.3	6.9	7.6	8.2	9.0

APPENDIX C

COPY OF THE TESTING DIRECTIONS FOR THE CLASSROOM TEACHER

Directions for the Teacher

Before Testing:

1. Be sure each student has a sharpened pencil and an eraser. Have also a supply of extra pencils.
2. Have the seating arrangement conducive to a testing situation.
3. Place a "Do Not Disturb" sign on your classroom door.
   --Testing
4. Be sure your principal knows of the testing time schedule so unexpected fire drills, etc., do not interrupt the testing.

General Directions:

1. Explain to the students that they will be taking some reading exercise tests. Explain that they will read 10 short stories over a period of five days and answer questions about each story. Tell them that there is an added feature that we think they will like in that before they read each story, they will be given the opportunity to rate the topic of each story for interest appeal.
2. Copy the following interest rating inventory on the board. Give at least two sample topics, such as horses, forest fires, Gen. Ulysses S. Grant, growing vegetables, etc., and have several members of the class orally tell how much they are or are not interested in the topic. Place a check mark on the blank beside the phrase that indicates each individual's rating for the sample topic being evaluated for interest.

(Sample Topic)

____(1) Like very, very much

____(2) Like quite a lot

____(3) Like a little

____(4) Neutral (neither like nor dislike)

____(5) Dislike a little

____(6) Dislike quite a lot

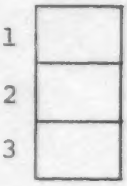
____(7) Dislike very, very much

3. Copy the following portion of a sample reading exercise and sample answer sheet on the board.

The wind wanted a man to take off his coat. The wind blew and blew, but the man held his coat closer and closer about him. The sun wanted the man to take off his coat. The sun smiled and smiled, and the man gladly took off his coat.

1. The wind (a) hid (b) was wise (c) smiled (d) blew
2. What smiled? (a) man (b) sun (c) wind (d) coat
3. This story is about the (a) sun and man (b) sun and wind (c) sun, wind, and man (d) wind and man

(Sample) Answer Sheet



Let students read and choose the best answer for each of the three test items in the sample. Fill in the letters a, b, c, or d in the appropriate spaces on the sample Answer Sheet.

4. Encourage them to want to do their best. Assure them that their scores will not be used in determining grades for report cards, the school permanent file, etc. (They will receive the test results by the end of the school year.) Explain that each story has some easy questions and some difficult questions to answer. No one is expected to get all the questions answered correctly on each of the stories.
5. Tell them there will be no particular set time limit for reading each story and answering the questions. However, most students will have finished in several minutes and after 10 minutes, time will be called to stop, close booklets, and put pencils down. (Ask them if there are any questions at this time about what they are to do.)

During Testing:

1. Distribute one copy of the interest rating inventory to each student, one copy of the answer sheet, and one copy of the booklet (C) asking them not to open the book until told to do so.
2. Have each student write his name, grade, school name, and teacher's name on the blanks at the top of the interest rating inventory and the answer sheet. Tell them not to write or place any marks in the reading

booklet at any time. (To the teacher--other classes will be using them, too.)

3. Have them place the interest rating inventory in front of them. You read the directions aloud while they follow along silently. Ask if there are any questions about anything they do not understand in taking the test. Then have them rate the first topic. Place the interest rating inventory underneath the answer sheet.
4. Have them place the answer sheet in front of them. You read the directions aloud while they follow along silently. Stress that when the signal is given to begin, they are to read the story and answer the questions by writing the letter of the best answer in the space across from the number of the question. Be sure the letter answers are filled in across from the number of the question and in the column under the correct story page number.
5. They are to open the booklet to page number ___. They are to do that one page only. (CHECK THE SHEET GIVING THE ORDER OF THE TEST STORIES TO BE GIVEN OVER THE FIVE-DAY PERIOD.)
6. Give signal, go. Record starting time. Move about the room, making sure all are proceeding according to directions. Give help on the mechanics of test taking, but no help in reading the story or test questions or in choosing the best answer.
7. After 10 minutes, give signal to stop, close books, and to put pencils down.
8. On the first day of testing, allow a 2-3 minute break if desired. On succeeding days, teacher observation of student behavior will determine how much of a break is necessary. Then proceed in like manner for the second story to be read and answered. Each student places a check mark to indicate his interest rating for the second topic on the interest rating inventory. Ask if there are any questions about what to do next. Then proceed with the second story (asking them to turn to page number ___) and to choose the best answer for each question. Give signal to begin, record the time, and move about the room, checking on the mechanics of test taking. Call time, collect answer sheets, then collect booklets, and then collect interest rating inventory sheets.
9. On each of the succeeding four days, repeat any of the general directions for absentees from the day before. Each day administer the selected reading exercises (in the order as listed on separate sheet for your class) according to the directions for the first day.

APPENDIX D

SAMPLE INTEREST RATING INVENTORY FOR ONE DAY'S TESTING ON TWO OF THE TEN McCALL-CRABBS PASSAGES

Name_____

Grade_____

School_____

Teacher_____

INTEREST RATING INVENTORY

Directions:

Read the topic that is listed for each story. Does the topic of the story interest you?

How much are you interested in it? A lot? Only a little? Or not at all?

Place a check mark below on the blank beside the group of words that comes closest to the way you feel about the topic (just how much you are or are not interested in the topic).

TOPIC--Lou Gehrig, famous baseball player

___(1) Like very, very much

___(2) Like quite a lot

___(3) Like a little

___(4) Neutral (neither like nor dislike)

___(5) Dislike a little

___(6) Dislike quite a lot

___(7) Dislike very, very much

TOPIC--making a tiny garden

___(1) Like very, very much

___(2) Like quite a lot

___(3) Like a little

___(4) Neutral (neither like nor dislike)

___(5) Dislike a little

___(6) Dislike quite a lot

___(7) Dislike very, very much

APPENDIX E

SAMPLE ANSWER SHEET FOR ONE DAY'S
TESTING ON TWO OF THE TEN
McCALL-CRABBS PASSAGES

Name_____

Grade_____

School_____

Teacher_____

ANSWER SHEET

Read the story on the page number your teacher asks you to read. Then choose the best answer for each question.

Write a, b, c, or d in the proper spaces on this answer sheet.

Be sure to write the letter of the answer you choose in the proper space across from the number of the question. Some stories have one or two more questions than others.

Do not write in the reading booklet.

#66

Number of Question

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	

#37

Number of Question

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	
9	
10	

AN INVESTIGATION OF THE ROLE OF INTEREST AS A FACTOR IN READING COMPREHENSION

AN ABSTRACT OF A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY

OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

OF

RUTGERS

THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

BY

ANN JUDITH SCHOLTZ

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

OF

MASTER OF EDUCATION

COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSON: Edward B. Fry, Ph.D.

NEW BRUNSWICK, NEW JERSEY JUNE 1975

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this investigation was to determine if a relationship exists between reading interest and reading comprehension. It was hypothesized that a positive relationship does exist between a reader's interest in a particular passage and his level of comprehension of it.

A 7-point interest rating inventory, ranging from a "liked very, very much" rating to a "disliked very, very much" rating, was used to measure the reader's interest for each of 10 story selections. Each student indicated his interest in each passage topic prior to reading that same passage. Passages used to measure the reader's comprehension were selected from the McCall-Crabbs Standard Test Lessons in Reading, Book C.

The mean reading achievement grade-level score for the 110 fifth-grade students participating in this study was 5.9 at the time of the study's testing program. Within each of the five classes, heterogeneously grouped, there appeared to be the normal range of reading abilities.

Grade-level scores, based on the number of questions answered correctly, were compared to determine if a statistical difference was to be found between the mean

reading comprehension scores on passages rated high in interest and passages rated low in interest.

A t test showed no significant difference between the means for the total population. Nor did a t test conducted to compare the mean high-interest reading score and the mean low-interest reading score for each of the 10 story selections reveal any level of significant difference.

Though a comparison of the mean grade-level scores between the highest interest rating (rating 1 on the interest rating scale) and the lowest interest rating (rating 7 on the interest rating scale) did reveal a level of significance for two of the 10 stories, the number of times each passage received the lowest interest rating is quite small. Therefore, the statistical difference should be viewed with caution.

The hypothesis tested in this study was not supported by the findings. It was concluded that expressed interest is not a factor in affecting reading comprehension. Reading interest patterns do provide information as to what children will read, but apparently are not, based on the present study, significant in determining degree of reading comprehension.

COURSE WORK FOR MASTER'S DEGREE IN READING

Spring, 1971		Instructor
320:561	Foundations of Reading	Dr. Mountain
Summer, 1971		
320:564	Remedial Reading	Dr. Swalm
320:565	Laboratory in Remedial Reading	Dr. Swalm
Fall, 1971		
290:513	Developmental Psychology: Early and Middle Years of Childhood	Miss Arnold
290:540	Principles and Theories of Learning	Dr. Cox
Spring, 1972		
290:501	Educational and Psychological Measurements	Dr. Geyer
299:515	Reading for Secondary, College, and Adult	Dr. Shew
320:566	Seminar in Reading Research and Supervision	Dr. Fry
610:581	Reading Materials for Children	Mrs. Long
Summer, 1972		
250:514	Language Arts in the Elementary School	Dr. Emig
290:519	Introduction to Exceptional Children	Mr. Strichart
Spring, 1974		
299:599	Master's Thesis Research	Dr. Fry
Fall, 1974		
299:599	Master's Thesis Research	Dr. Fry
Spring, 1975		
299:599	Master's Thesis Research	Dr. Kling

VITA

Name: Ann Judith Scholtz

Address: R.D. 1, Box 249, Frenchtown, New Jersey 08825

Telephone: (201) 996-2755

Educational Background:

High School:	Frenchtown High School Frenchtown, New Jersey June 1953
College:	Trenton State College Trenton, New Jersey B.S., 1957, in Elementary Education

Professional Certification:

New Jersey:	Elementary, Grades K-8

Professional Experience:

1957-present:	Fourth-grade Teacher Kingwood Township School Frenchtown, R.D., New Jersey